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Forest Products Week Honors Montana's Forest Heritage

MISSOULA, Mont. – Montana residents will have opportunities to celebrate their connections to the state's forests during Montana Forest Products Week on Oct. 17-24.

All Montanans benefit from the sustainable management of the state's forests, whether it is providing clean air and water, abundant recreation and wildlife, wood products we use daily or good paying jobs.

In 2011, Montana Legislature established Montana Forest Products Week to recognize the forest products manufacturing sector and its contribution to the state's forests and economy, as well as the value of locally produced wood products and forest stewardship. This legislation was mirrored off of National Forest Products Week, which was established by Congress in 1960.

"Working forests, and the men and women who work in the forestry sector, provide numerous benefits to Montanans," said State Forester Bob Harrington. "An integrated forest products infrastructure shouldn't be taken for granted: it's integral to the health of our forests and rural economies across the state."

Harrington said he is concerned about the precarious position of the remaining mills and logging contractors in the state, and supports more proactive forest management that produces timber for them.

"Montana mills and logging contractors create value for forest products, which helps pay for forest restoration projects that improve resiliency to wildfire, insects, and a changing climate," he explained.

Montana has more than 25 million acres of forested lands. Last year, approximately 7,000 workers made a living working in the forestry sector. Montana mills produce most of the major wood building materials needed for home and commercial construction. Value-added wood products produced in the state include everything from doors, flooring, window frames, landscape bark, wood based chemicals and more.

"Montana is fortunate to have innovators and entrepreneurs producing hundreds of wood products sold nationally and internationally," said Mo Bookwalter, DNRC Forest Products Specialist. "Not all states have this combination of highly skilled workers and locally available forest resources."

Montana-made wood products will be donated to help build a Habitat for Humanity home in Stevensville, Mont., during this year's Montana Forest Products Week. Lumber and plywood manufactured in rural communities around the state will help offset the cost of the home.

“We are proud to be using Montana wood to build this home and appreciate the opportunity to be a part of the weeklong celebration,” said Mike Kibler with Habitat for Humanity of Ravalli County. “Partnerships like this are the key to our success.”

School children across the state will have the opportunity to learn firsthand from forestry professionals about forest management, wildland firefighting, insects and disease and forest-based economies.

“This is an opportunity to take these school children out for a day and show them hands on what it means to manage a forest, what a forester does, to learn to recognize the conditions of the forest that surrounds them and see where wood products are made,” explained Amy Helena of the Montana Society of American Foresters.

All Montanans are encouraged to celebrate their individual connections to the state’s forests and forest products from during Montana Forest Products Week and participate in its events and activities.

Events are planned statewide; the Chambers of Commerce in Missoula, Mont., and Kalispell, Mont., will both be conducting timber tours to showcase forest management, processing facilities and niche markets for Montana wood products. A schedule of events and information about Montana’s forest products sector is available at <http://dnrc.mt.gov/Forestry/Assistance/Biomass/ForProdWeek/default.asp> or on Facebook, on the “Montana Forest Products Week” page.